



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

December 16, 2004

Dear ENERGY STAR[®] Set-top Box Partners and Other Interested Parties:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) intent to temporarily suspend the ENERGY STAR specification for set-top boxes.

As you may know, EPA has conducted research into various options for a revised Tier 2 specification for set-top boxes. The goals for revising the Tier 2 specification are as follows:

- Develop a more robust specification, which would be both technically feasible and cost-effective for manufacturers
- Garner increased energy, carbon, and monetary savings from ENERGY STAR qualified set-top boxes
- Introduce a Sleep Mode for set-top boxes
- Encourage greater manufacturer participation in the program

Unfortunately, EPA believes many of these goals cannot be met in the short term and therefore proposes to significantly narrow the scope of the ENERGY STAR set-top box specification to include **only digital to analog over the air converter boxes (DTAs) and over the air HDTV tuner boxes.**¹ In short, ENERGY STAR proposes to (1) not move forward with the Tier 2 specification revision and (2) revise the current specification for HDTV tuners and set a new specification for digital to analog converter boxes. HDTV tuners are currently covered by the ENERGY STAR set-top specification while digital to analog converters are not. Subsequently, until a new specification for HDTV tuners and digital to analog converters takes effect, no set-top boxes will be eligible to earn the ENERGY STAR.

During this transition, it is proposed that manufacturers **must discontinue using the ENERGY STAR mark on any set-top box products manufactured or on any collateral materials created after June 1, 2005.** Accordingly, manufacturers may no longer refer to themselves as ENERGY STAR set-top box partners after **June 1, 2005.** EPA will allow any set-top box models and related materials already bearing the ENERGY STAR mark prior to June 1, 2005 to filter through distribution channels.

¹ *DTA (Digital TV Adapter):* receives terrestrial (over the air) digital signals and converts them to an analog output suitable for analog TVs. Does not provide digital signal output, and thus does not work with a digital TV. The DTA category does not include converters that work with satellite or cable digital signals. Nor does it cover devices with multi-functionality such as a DVD player with digital to analog conversion capability.

HDTV Tuner: receives and processes terrestrial (over the air) digital signals and provides one or more digital or analog output. Works with digital or analog TVs, but its main feature is to provide free over the air HDTV. The category does not include HDTV set-top boxes that receive signals via satellite or cable. Nor does it cover devices with multi-functionality such as a DVR with HDTV tuner capabilities.

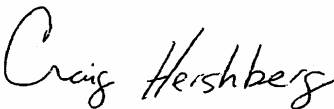
Digital to analog converter boxes, which are expected to experience high sales after 2007, following the implementation of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rulings requiring broadcasters to discontinue analog signal broadcasting, are not yet available in the US market. Therefore, EPA will use product test data provided by the European Union and Australia to develop this specification, along with input from other energy-efficiency standards that have already been set for these products. EPA has collected US test data for HDTV tuner boxes that will be analyzed and subsequently shared with stakeholders. The specification development process for digital to analog converters and HDTV tuners will begin in early 2005.

It is EPA's hope that when conditions become more favorable for the development of a set-top box sleep mode — that will enable increased energy, carbon and monetary savings — a broader ENERGY STAR set-top box specification will be developed.

Stakeholders are encouraged to submit comments on our proposal to suspend the set-top program via e-mail, at hershberg.craig@epa.gov. Comments received by **Friday, January 14, 2005** will be considered. If stakeholders would like further explanation regarding the rationale behind EPA's decision to suspend the ENERGY STAR specification for set-top boxes, please call me directly at (202) 343-9120.

Thank you for your attention and ongoing support of ENERGY STAR. Happy Holidays.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Hershberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Hershberg, Product Manager
ENERGY STAR for Consumer Electronics and Office Equipment